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UNCLAS HALIFAX 000309

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: PEI TORIES THREE-PEAT, BUT LIBERALS IMPROVE THEIR NUMBERS

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¶1. (U) Prince Edward Island Premier Pat Binns won a third consecutive majority in the province's September 29 election. Binns's Progressive Conservatives took 23 of the 27 seats in the legislature. The Liberal Party improved its standing in the house dramatically, but from a low base: the Liberals went from one MLA to four, including new party leader Robert Ghiz. Voter turnout, despite Hurricane Juan, was over 80%.

¶2. (SBU) COMMENT: Premier Binns is well-known to Consulate and Embassy staff and we not anticipate any significant changes in PEI policy on issues that could affect relations with the U.S. The high voter turnout, in the wake of a major storm that did extensive damage across the province, is a remarkable comment on the PEI electorate's intense interest in politics. PEI Liberals are no doubt encouraged by their 300% increase in seats, but Robert Ghiz has a tough fight ahead of him to try to bring his party back to government. END COMMENT.

HILL